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Week five: WFL

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

Gary Miracle

In the studio

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. Tammy is with me. Tammy, when I first heard our guest's story, it's a tough one. It will break your heart.

TAMMY: It really is hard. And it's kind of one of those, it brings up that question of like, so it is easy to trust God when everything is going great in our lives but what do we do when we hit the bad days? When something just changes and the rug is pulled from underneath us? How do we lean into the faithfulness of God in the hard times and the hard seasons?

RANDY: Well, we're going to talk about that today. Our guest is Gary Miracle, and his book is *No More Bad Days*. Listen, this is a guy who has seen some bad days, but he is writing about some good things. Gary, great to have you on *Life Today*!

GARY: Goodness gracious, guys! This is a bucket list moment for me. I'm so honored that you're giving me this time and creating this platform. I'm thankful.

RANDY: For those who don't know anything about you, back us up a little bit. I know we can't get the whole story in this short period of time but give us an idea of what you've been through.

GARY: Four years ago, I was 39 years old. And I would say up until that point of my life, I was living, I guess you would say the All-American dream. I had a beautiful work-

from-home job. My wife at the time was a stay-at-home mom with three biological boys, and an adopted daughter from Columbia, South America. Growing up in the church, we couldn't write a better story.

But then I think we say sometimes, "But God." Like he kind of intervenes. So it was the day after Christmas, December 26th in 2019. I woke up and I wasn't feeling great. I ended up taking myself to the emergency room. When I got there, they asked me a series of questions. At the end of that line of questioning, they told me I had the flu, and they chalked me up to that. They gave me a Tamiflu shot and a steroid shot. They gave me the whole, "Go home, get a lot of rest, drink a lot of water. If you're not better in ten days come back and see us again."

So I went home and woke up the next morning, December 27th, feeling much worse. But tried to be a man, stiffening up my upper lip a little bit. Everybody is making fun of me and told me I had the man flu. I was just moaning and groaning the whole time but that was okay. But I was feeling much worse. So much so that I swallowed my pride and I took myself back to the emergency room for a second time. And come to find out, I was having an allergic reaction to the Tamiflu shot that they gave me the day before. So they gave me another steroid shot to counteract that.

A couple of days went by and on New Year's Eve, 2019, I ended up going back to the emergency room for the fourth time. So I skipped a visit here. But at this time, they looked at me and they put me in the back room and they hooked me up to some machines, 46 of them to be exact. So I had a positive flu test, and I developed strep throat that got into my bloodstream. The strep caused a blood infection and caused the septic shock to take place and it went rampant.

Once I got hooked up to those machines, they looked at me and they looked at my family and said, "You need to call the rest of your family and all of Gary's friends to come in and say goodbye." They gave me a 1.7 percent chance to live through the night of New Year's Eve 2019. My family and friends did exactly what they were asked to do. They

came to say goodbye. Everyone was just shocked. I was just celebrating Christmas day with my family.

You know, Christmas in 2019 fell on a Sunday so we were at church even celebrating that time. And then five days later, I'm getting a 1.7 percent chance to live. They don't think I'm going to make it through the night on New Year's Eve. As my family and friends were driving in, one of my family members at the time was living in Orlando. She was driving in, and while she was driving in, she felt like she heard from the Lord that I needed to be on an ECMO machine. I'd never heard of an ECMO machine at the time. I'll tell you what it is in a second.

She arrived at the hospital and said, "Okay. This might sound crazy but I feel like I just heard from the Lord. Gary needs to be on ECMO." And before she could finish that sentence, they let her know that they didn't have an ECMO machine at the hospital that I was at. But they said, "We're minute by minute with this guy. We're at the end of our rope. So if you think he needs to be transferred somewhere just let us know and we'll initiate that transfer."

So they sat down and started researching. And at that time on New Year's Eve 2019 in Florida, there were only seven hospitals in the whole state that had an ECMO machine. One of them happened to be in Orlando. So they initiated that transfer. And at 11:00 p.m. on New Year's Eve, so literally one hour before everyone here on the East Coast was about to scream and shout and celebrate "Happy New Year," I'm being shoved into a helicopter to be life-flighted from one hospital to Orlando.

I arrived there around 1:00 a.m. Now we're on January 1st, 2020, the best year of all of our lives, right? So I arrived there. They rushed me from the helicopter into the hospital, into the I.C.U. floor where my bed was going to be. They hooked me up to the same 46 machines, looked at my family once that happened, confirmed the 1.7 percent chance to live, and said, "Why is this guy here?" And my family said, "Well, we're here because we believe that Gary needs to be on an ECMO machine." Once again, before they could

finish that sentence, they were informed that I was not a candidate for the ECMO machine. The reason I was not a candidate for the machine is because it is designed for people who just received a heart transplant or a lung transplant. It is designed to keep your other organs strong while your new heart or your new lungs kick in.

Well, I didn't have a heart transplant or a lung transplant so on paper if you're looking at policy over people, I was not a candidate for the ECMO machine. Like they weren't wrong. So why, God, why in all the world did all of this just happen? And just for me to die here instead of there, and now leave my family with all of these bills, and so on and so forth. Like what is happening?

However, the nurses and doctors reassured my family by telling them they would make me as comfortable as possible along the way. So thanks for that. Seven a.m. rolls around and I'm still kicking. The new day shift of nurses and doctors clock in and at 7:18 a.m. they are talking about me when all 46 machines that I was on and a long random simultaneous sound just went, "Beep!" And I died laying right in front of them.

Completely lifeless. They said it was like just out of the movies. Within 30 seconds my whole body started turning blue. Code Blue came over all of the speakers and all the other doctors and nurses come rushing in. This 70-pound nurse, soaking wet, just jumps on top of my body and just starts king-konging my chest just to try to bring anything back. And 11 minutes later, at 7:29 a.m., they looked up at one of the machines and they found a slight pulse. They had brought me back in that moment.

While they were walking out into the waiting room to tell my family what had just happened to me, the cardiothoracic surgeon who was on call that night joined them at that moment to go out to the waiting room. While they were talking to my family, updating them, this cardiothoracic surgeon said, "Listen, I'm just getting involved in this case. I'm learning about it. I know we're minute by minute. I don't know what we're going to do here. So I'm going to throw up a Hail Mary and put him on something called the ECMO machine."

It's as if God just showed up at that moment. And the way that it works is that it takes all of the blood and all of the oxygen and all of the circulation from your body and it pumps it into your core to keep your organs running strong while everything else kicks in. Well, doctors are pretty good at what they do these days. So most new hearts or new lungs kick in in about 24 hours, 48, at most. So people aren't on ECMO for very long. I was in a coma from January 1st until January 10th. So for ten days, I was in a coma on the ECMO machine, which meant for ten days my arms and my legs were not receiving any blood or oxygen or circulation because everything was pumped into my core. So my arms and legs just started dying on me. So much so that they could not save them.

And my family had to decide on my behalf. Do I lose my life or do I lose my limbs? And here I am, alive without the limbs.

RANDY: So both arms from just below the elbow, both legs from just below the knee.

GARY: Yes, sir.

RANDY: Where does that leave you? On the one hand, we could say wow! What a miracle—no pun intended—that God used the doctors, miraculously intervened, gave a family member knowledge but saved your life. On the other hand, we could look at it and go, now you've got to live in a whole new way that's traumatic. How do you look at it?

GARY: It's—so I grew up in the church. I became a Christian when I was 11 years old. I remember I was sitting in the third-row pew on the right-hand side of Rockledge Baptist Church where pastor Randy Sensival was on stage giving a two to three-minute call to worship. And I said the prayer that we all say all of our lives in that moment, "Dear Jesus, I'm a sinner. Come into my heart." Pastor Randy let us know in that moment that Jesus is the answer. I was 11, so I didn't know what the questions were at that moment but I knew the answer then. And here I am at 42, and what I've learned along the way is that Jesus is the answer. And I say that to kind of tee this up to say, I'm not some super Christian who

is going to give you the Sunday School answers to everything that is asked and speak that Christianese language kind of thing.

But at that moment, when I was learning the gravity of my situation and that I was about to lose all four of my limbs, I remember looking up at my dad. There is a verse in the book of Job that says, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away." And what I had learned in that moment, laying on my hospital bed, learning that I was about to get my arms and my legs cut off was that for 39 years of my life, the Lord had given me hands and legs and I had used them for everything he wanted me to, a lot that I didn't as well. But in that moment, it was just taking away time. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away.

For 39 years, he gave me hands and legs. I'm just praying that I get another 39 years without them and I get to be the same story. But thank God that verse doesn't end there. Because it says, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away but blessed be the name of the Lord." Growing up in the church I've been saying that God is good and preaching that God is good and trying to convince other people that God is good. So how dare I, now that something traumatic is happening to me in my life, now live like he's no longer good. That's just not a stance I'm willing to take in life right now.

TAMMY: It's a hard place to be. Don't you think, Gary? It's really hard. Even backing up to that scripture, "The Lord gives and he takes away." So I think about my own loss and losing Trent. He gave me a great gift in this man for so many years and he was gone. I've had to reconcile that scripture even in such a way to say, I don't believe in my story that God took Trent away from me. But I believe that things were allowed to happen because he saw that it would serve a greater purpose in my life.

When I think about taking like—if something falls away like in my story without Trent, God is going to replace it with something greater, something better for your life. So even when I think about him giving and taking, I think of a good God that wanted to give to your life, not to take something from you, but life happens too. So life happened to you and it was tough. But what God is doing in your life now is magnificent. And the man of

God that you are becoming now through all of this is amazing. God has given you such a redemption in your story. So tell me about that where you've got to that place.

GARY: Yeah, when I was discharged after my 107-day stay in the hospital, I just knew in that moment that—I was confident that the Lord, this was a part of my story. My world is not falling apart, it is falling into place. I am okay with a God that orchestrates that out. So I want to be okay with that. Sometimes I'm not, but I really, really want to be okay with that most of the time.

And I want to be real with people about that too. Some days, as a whole, listen, this is not a detachment of reality or some religious jargon. I get that we're going to have tough situations and there are going to be hard times, and there are bad outcomes to things. But listen, if it's true that if scripture is true, that if Christ's mercies are new every single day if his mercies are new every morning and I am in Christ in me, if Galatians 2:20 is correct, and it is no longer me, then that means you guys aren't sitting here talking to Gary Miracle, you're talking to Christ in Gary Miracle. That is who I am. That is my identity. And if that is true and his mercies are new every day and I'm Christ in Gary Miracle, then I can lay my head on my pillow at the end of every day and say as a whole, from here on out, I don't want to have any more bad days. Christ is good. He is good to me. He didn't mess up on me. He didn't make a mistake on me.

Society wants to tell me every which way that I'm not enough, that I'm not good-looking enough, that I don't speak well enough, that I'm not pretty enough, fast enough, like whatever the case may be, society just wants to inundate us with that. I don't think we cheer each other on enough. We talk about the things that can divide us too much way more than we talk about the things that can unite us. And that's our stories and what Christ has done.

Christ didn't stop taking away even when I got out of the hospital. My wife at the time, that I keep referencing, took another path and God is continuing to redeem my story. And I have a beautiful new wife, her name is Jenna and we have a beautiful crazy circus of a

blended family of seven children that we have under our roof. We're so thankful for what God is continuing to do. And we're just continuing to pray that my story doesn't go in vain along the way. That I can continue to just shout if I can.

RANDY: It is an amazing testimony. Miracle is your real last name.

GARY: That is not my amputee stage name. That is my real last name.

RANDY: Which is really wild! But there is one thing I need to ask you about before we let you go, before we wrap it up. You talk about the gift of grace. We see that when things are going great, I'm blessed! Hashtag blessed. Where do you see the gift of grace when things are not going so well?

GARY: Gosh, I've learned along the way that at the end of the day, every single one of us, we all have struggles in our lives. We're all struggling with something. If you're not right now, that's wonderful but buckle up. We're told in this world you will have trouble and it shouldn't be a surprise to us. We all have struggles. I would venture to say that the only difference between me and you right now is that my struggles are extremely visible. You can see them.

You can see if you were in the back with me earlier how difficult it was for me to eat a sub or take a drink or whatever the case may be. And if you guys were with me tonight, and we were out to dinner, if we were at a restaurant, while we were eating, there is probably a really good chance throughout that meal at some point in time I'm going to drop my fork. Like it's a hands thing. You wouldn't understand but I'd probably drop my fork. And I guarantee you, without even thinking, and joy in your heart and a smile on your face you would bend down and pick up that fork and you would hand it back to me. For whatever your reasons may be, I don't know to save me the embarrassment, to serve me, to just muscle memory, you see a need and you do it and whatever, I don't know. But I would believe that you would do that for me, and I want to do that for other people.

But if I don't know what your struggle is then I don't know how to pick up your fork and hand it back to you. But those invisible struggles, the ones you can't see, I genuinely believe can kill us more than septic shock or a multi-system organ failure. But anxiety in today's day and age is a very real thing. And depression, eating disorders, relationships, and finances, and I could go on and on and on about invisible struggles. And I think Christians, we put that it is fine mask on our face and we tell each other, everything is fine. I'm fine! I'm fine! Wife and kids are fine. Fine as fine can be. That's kind of our anthem sometimes as Christians because we're scared to death to let people know who we really are or what we're really struggling with.

I tell people all the time through this that if your hope is hard to find you can borrow mine. Because what I have learned along the way is that I've never been more loved in all of my life through the sharing of my struggles when I thought I would be judged. And if I can get one person to take that mask off—because I'm going to be okay, y'all. Like I've got legs. I'm walking in here. I've got my driver's license back. I'm going to be okay. But if anxiety eats you alive, you're not going to be okay. And I need to know that as your brother in Christ. Like I need to know that because I want to link arms with you. Because I had people all over the world link arms with me, and I believe that they prayed me out of heaven, and Christ isn't done with me here yet. So I'm going to be okay. And if I can get one person to take that mask off and meet Jesus for the first time or for the 100th time, I could care less, then bring this on, I would do it all over again. I'm not just saying that as some Christian. Because I'm going to be all right.

There is going to be a day that I'm going to be running down the streets of gold as fast as I can with my brand-new legs and my brand-new arms and I'm going to be all right. But I need everybody to come with me. I want everybody there to see me racing down those streets.

RANDY: Gary, that's just grace for you to be able to say that, God working in you. And by the way, if you're listening, you want somebody to pray with you, you want to make sure you're running down those streets of gold? Maybe you're struggling with something

inside. Scripture says, "Don't fear that which can kill the body, fear that which can kill the soul." If you're dying inside, pick up the phone, and use that phone number. Somebody will pray with you. Somebody will talk with you. So do it. Listen to Gary, he knows what he's talking about. He's been through bad days but he's got hope and you can too.

If you would like Gary's book, *No More Bad Days*, just request it when you help us give some other people a good day. There are some people there that right now need someone, to use Gary's metaphor, to pick up their fork. They need a helping hand. They need someone to love them, to show them the love of Christ while they're telling them about the love of Christ, which is what we do. Watch this, and you'll see how.

On the mission field

RANDY: How many children do you have?

Open Captions

>> I have five children but one of them is dead so I am left with four.

RANDY: I'm so sorry!

Open Captions

>> There is so much death in this area. You can't count how many women who have lost children due to this dirty water.

RANDY: I don't understand all the things that happen physiologically, but the mother recognizes the same signs in her nine-month-old that she saw in her year-and-a-half-old son before he died. This is the urgency that we're facing right now. This is the reality in places just like this. They need clean water and they need it now!

If someone was able to bring clean water to your village, what would you say to that person?

Open Captions

>> I would clap my hands as a sign of joy.

RANDY: If this little one has any hope for a future, we have to provide an alternative because drinking this water is death. We want to give mothers like this hope for their children. I'm asking you to reach out and give the best gift you can. Support Mission: Water for LIFE and know that when you do, you will be helping little ones just like this.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: We have a choice today. Those hands that hold those small children can be used to bury that child, and unfortunately, that is the case. But those hands can also clap with joy. And they will do it when you and I come together and we go into those places of desperation and we drill that water well and we bring clean life-giving water out of the God's ground and it turns those situations around.

We've done this in so many places with your support. You've made it possible. But there are still places where children are dying. And that's why the need is urgent. We need to go in there right now as soon as possible and give them water.

Tammy, we have seen this so we know it works. But also, you have seen the need. We know it is desperate.

TAMMY: Yeah, it is heavy, Randy. You know when I see a piece like that too and you sitting right next to her, it makes my heart happy the moment to know that you had a moment to minister to her, and just love on her and her family. I think that's one thing I love so much about our ministry too is the ministry that happens, the love that we get to share with these incredible families that are hurting so desperately. They need hope and I don't want to give them false hope by going into those villages and just hugging them for

a moment and leaving. I want to bring them real hope, something tangible. We leave there and we tell them we're going to go back and tell everybody about you. We're going to raise awareness of this need right here that you have. We want you to be filled with joy. We want to be a part of that.

And we want you to be a part of that with us today. Would you go online? Would you make a call? Would you give the best gift you possibly can, today? Even if you have given before, today is a brand-new day, and with it comes a brand-new need and another life to save. Would you go online and make that call and join with us today?

RANDY: Yeah! And we can do it. I love Tammy that you point out that when we go into these places, we're not under any illusion that we're going to solve the entire issue in the whole world. What we do know is we're going to go in and we're going to represent Christ to somebody and we're going to show them the love of Christ, and we're also going to meet their basic needs. This is more than just a humanitarian outreach, it is a ministry.

TAMMY: And I love it so much!

RANDY: It has more than just a short-term benefit, though it does, it has eternal benefits.

So will you help us go in spiritually and physically? Let's meet the spiritual needs, let's meet the practical needs. Your gift right now of \$48 will help provide clean drinking water for ten people. The average cost of a well you see is \$4800. So if you want to provide a whole well, come on, let's do it! Let's do it for a village of about a thousand people for about 70 years; that's why we call it Water for LIFE. However, you can come in. A gift of \$144 will provide clean drinking water for on average about 30 people.

Whatever you can do, it's about going in with the love of Christ, meeting that practical need, giving them water for their bodies so that they can live, and sharing the water of life with them. So please, join us in this beautiful mission of Christ, Water for LIFE. Go online, go to the phone, and make the best gift you can.

Begin Video

***ANNOUNCER:** Every day, thousands of lives are lost to waterborne disease, and nearly half of those are children under the age of five. Through mission Water for LIFE, you can give mothers hope and children a future as we provide clean, life-giving water for thousands of children and their families before it's too late.*

With your gift today, you can help drill and establish 350 water wells this year. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children. A gift of \$48 will provide for ten. \$72 will provide for 15. And \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With a gift of any amount, we'll send you Daughter, written by James and Betty's granddaughter, Laney Rene. This insightful book invites all girls and women to walk in the freedom of their God-given identity and embrace who they really are.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request the "Great is the Lord" decorative blanket featuring the words of Psalm 145:3. This beautiful blanket is perfect for comfort and cold weather and a reminder of your help with Water for LIFE.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people. Or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well. And request our new bronze sculpture, "A Cup of Water," inspired by Jesus' words in Mark 9:41.

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: You really can bring joy to someone who is in so much need. You can be the

love of Christ in someone's life in word and deed. I hope you will go to the phone. Make the best gift you can. Or go online, sometimes that is a lot easier. When you do, if you want Gary's book, be sure to request it. Tammy, I know it will bless them just like he's blessed us today.

TAMMY: You have blessed us so much, Gary. Thank you for your life. Thank you for fighting for life. If you find that you're in a place right now where bad things are happening all around you, go to the Father. Pray that God would give you a faith, faith in this season, and that he would bring you perfect, perfect peace. We love you. We love you, Gary. We'll see you next time on *Life Today!*